

Woolton Acre Retirement Living



Have your say

Enter and View Report, July 2025



Introduction

What is an Enter and View visit?

Healthwatch Liverpool has powers to carry out what we describe as 'Enter and View' visits. These are visits to health and social care settings which help us in our role as the independent local champion for health and social care. Enter and View visits are carried out by small teams of trained members of our staff and volunteers to observe a health and social care service at work, for example at a GP practice, a care home, or a hospital. We only visit services that are publicly funded, e.g. through the NHS or via local authorities.

What happens during an Enter and View visit?

During an Enter and View visit we talk to people using the service, whether patients or residents, and to friends and relatives where appropriate. We also speak to staff to find out where they think the service is working well, and where it could be improved. We also observe the service. We write up our observations and the feedback we receive and publish it as a report. Our report is sent to the provider of the service, as well as to regulators such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the local authority, and NHS commissioners when appropriate.

If there are recommendations in the report, the service provider is asked for a response, which we later publish online alongside the Enter and View report.

Our visits give us a 'snapshot' of a service. We are always grateful for feedback from residents, relatives and other visitors to be able to get a fuller picture. You can leave feedback via telephone on 0300 77 77 007, or email engagement@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk. Alternatively, you can contact us via: www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/have-your-say

Details of the Enter and View Visit:

Name of the service visited: Woolton Acre Retirement Living

Address: Woolton Acre Retirement Living, High Street, Woolton, Liverpool, L25 7TB

The Date of the Enter and View Visit: 01/07/25

The members of the Healthwatch Enter and View Team that undertook the visit were:

Terry Ferguson: Engagement and Project Officer

Alice Lloyd: Engagement & Project Officer (Learning Disability and Neurodivergent focus)

This was announced visit.

We would like to thank Woolton Acre staff and residents for facilitating the visit and for taking the time to talk to us.

Why did we carry out this visit?

Enter and view visits can take place for a variety of reasons, for example to find out more about a particular service, or in response to public feedback.

The Enter and View visit to Woolton Acre was to learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made. The visit was not in response to any prior feedback or concerns identified relating to the quality of this service.

Safeguarding

Healthwatch Liverpool Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies, and the Local Authority will be notified on the same day as the Enter and View visit.

There were no safeguarding concerns identified during this enter and view visit.

About the Service

Background

Woolton Acre Retirement Living is a care home for people with general residential needs. They have recently been approved by the CQC to also provide residential dementia care. Management advised that residents could go on to develop dementia after arriving without a diagnosis and that they want to be able to provide for residents across their journey without worrying about moving care homes.

At the time of our visit, they had capacity for 48 residents but currently have 21 residents in place as they are a relatively new care home and are slowly working up to capacity. They have works underway on the site to increase capacity to 70 residents with these new beds being related to their planned dementia service.

Discussion with the manager

We met with Kerry the deputy manager at Woolton Acre and Daniel Blaney the manager who showed us around the home. We were asked to sign in upon entry and our credentials were checked.

Staff

We were advised that at the time of our visit there were around 35 staff members working at Woolton Acre and that they did not bring across any staff from the old Woolton Manor service and say they have worked hard to distance themselves from the previous provider.

Kerry the deputy manager advised that she has over 20 years' experience within the care sector. Management advised that they have tried to hire staff with a wide variety of experience in varying roles such as community settings to help with new ideas and in supporting the overall experience of residents.

At the time of our visit, we were advised that shifts tend to involve 1 senior carer and 4 carers on a day shift whilst a night shift tends to be 1 senior carer and 2 carers. Management advises that they look at multiple factors to inform their staffing levels including evacuation procedures and a focus on safety when it comes to staffing.

Kerry advised that they don't tend to require the use of agency staff but if they do they use the same agency which provides full details including one-page profiles. They also offer the choice to request the same staff that have attended previously.

Healthcare

Management described a previously mixed relationship at the time of our visit with their GP practice Woolton House Medical Centre, but things had improved significantly. They advised there had been barriers at reception level but now the GP had given more power to the receptionists to action requests.

Management advised that the doctor attends the care home monthly for meetings and that they also have regular MDT's which include the community matron

Staff described Catherine Barnett from Meds Management as *"really good and support us with anything we need help with"*

RiteCare pharmacy are described as being okay but staff have had some issues with medication not being sent correctly in some monthly cycles. They are unsure what is causing these issues as both the GP practice and pharmacy are disputing the cause.

Woolton Acre did not have a nominated NHS dentist at the time of our visit, but Woolton Dental practice has supported some residents in need on a case-by-case basis. They have also had support from NHS 111 who arranged for emergency dental support when a resident had a severe abscess.

Hospitals and trusts

Staff say they are 'up and down' with the hospitals particularly with hospital staff describing residents as suitable for general residential care when Woolton Acre feel they clearly are not and would require more complex care.

Staff value the trusted assessors and say they get more accurate results from them. They say that part of the care homes admission process is speaking to the resident and their family pre-admission and finding out they are looking for in their home.

An example was given of a bad admission was where a resident who was discharged to Woolton Acre far away from where they lived despite relatives asking for this not to happen. Staff say that the family was also promised physiotherapy to be arranged for the resident from the hospital discharge team, but this was never arranged. This led to multiple meetings with the MDT and social workers to try and resolve the problems with this discharge.

Immedicare is described as very good and bar one long wait around Christmas time staff say the service is improving as time goes on.

Resident Admissions

Staff advise that when they are assessing a new resident, they chat with the resident themselves as well as their family and friends if possible. *"For most visits family tend to visit first as they want to see it in person as you would. You want the best for your loved one"*. Staff advised that privately funded admissions tend to be easier to arrange as there are fewer moving parts and they can often speak to the residents as these tend to be more planned.

Management discussed how staff adjust their communication style for residents. They have one resident who uses written communication to express themselves and so they support them in this. They have another resident who speaks English fluently as their second language and they adjust their communication styles if the person is unwell and struggling with communication. Management say they also make sure to recognise cultural celebrations that are important to this resident and other residents/

They discussed one resident who is looking to move into a flat nearby as they have recovered enough to regain their independence. They advised that this resident uses a mobility scooter, and they have supported the use of this during their journey.

For residents' day to day lives staff say they are very resident led and each person is treated individually. Some residents like to sleep in late or stay up late and this is absolutely their choice. Staff mentioned that the health and care act is definitive about choice and dignity, and that they make sure to follow this.

Resident feedback

Management say they carry out physical rounds of the care home speaking to residents asking them how things are and have an open-door policy for residents to feedback. Management say they aware as occupancy increases from the 21 residents at the time of our visit, they will not be able to rely on this and will be introducing residents' meetings and forums.

Activities

At the time of our visit Woolton Acre had a part-time activities coordinator and are in the process of hiring a full-time member to prepare for the increased number of residents. They use the 'oomph' service which provides digital activities and are looking at purchasing the large computer tablet on wheels system. Staff feel that having this will prevent them from being restricted to activities that always require the activities coordinator on site at that time.

They do not have a minibus use other existing networks to hire them including the oomph service which provides a minibus service.

Visiting

Staff say there are no specific rules on family and friends visiting their loved ones and they are very much led by residents and just focus on keeping everyone safe.

There are no protected mealtimes and families are welcome to visit and spend time with their loved ones during meals.

Food

Management says they have 2 chefs working at Woolton Acre with most shifts at the time of our visit having 1 chef and 1 kitchen assistant working.

Staff mentioned that they are working on providing more accessible menus and it is a goal they are working towards with the future introduction of residents with dementia who may struggle with standard written menus.

Staff say at the time of our visit the menu consists of two choices, and they write these on the board and have written menus. Staff understand these are not as accessible as they could be.

Residents can make requests for smaller or alternative meals and can request snacks throughout the day. We saw residents being offered cups of tea, coffee and snacks during our visit.

Residents Items

Management advised that residents initials are marked in their clothes to prevent loss. They said that laundry staff carries out a full inventory when a new resident moves in and new items are added to this inventory as needed. Management say staff tend to get a feel for what the residents wear as they get to know them and will often spot any new items missing initials.

Staff say that glasses, hearing aids and dentures are documented in residents daily routine plans. Staff will prompt residents that need reminding to put them on.

Observations

Observations of the building and facilities

We were shown around the home by the manager Daniel Blaney.

We saw staff interacting with residents and there seemed to be a good rapport. Staff were using residents' names and appropriate behaviours such as getting down to a resident's eye level when seated and using gentle touch to communicate when appropriate.

All the residents we met were dressed in appropriate footwear and looked clean and well looked after.

The care home was decorated well throughout with many ornaments and pictures creating a homely environment that was not clinical. In all the areas we saw the care home looked clean throughout with no strong smells. The flooring looked in good condition with no trip hazards and the walls looked clean well decorated.

Hallways

All the hallways we saw looked well decorated with pictures and decorations on the walls. The handrails were secure and visually distinct from the walls which provides a more dementia friendly environment and helps aid navigation.

The manager mentioned that Woolton Acre is looking at adding some feature walls. The reason they gave is that they look nice and support residents in navigating the care home. This is a good example of considering dementia friendly navigation in the design of the home.

Combined lounge and dining room

The room was being as a lounge and dining room at the time of our visit due to the low occupancy. The room was bright with large windows and was well decorated with a large TV and comfortable colourful chairs for residents. In the kitchen area there were tables and chairs available as well as other decorations.

It felt like a cosy environment, and we met several residents enjoying the area with one completing a crossword.

Garden

We saw a fenced off well maintained garden with outdoor seating and one resident outside enjoying the area. The manager advised that they are looking at developing

the space further to include more flowers and outside equipment to make the most of the space.

There is also a nearby park that is within walking distance for more mobile residents, and the exterior areas of the building has lots of trees and greenery that looked well maintained at the time of our visit.

Quiet Lounge

Management showed us a small lounge for residents who prefer a calmer area to relax in. This lounge used to be a bedroom, but management felt that there was a need for a calm area for residents to relax. The room had minimal clutter and great views of the outside greenery giving the room a calming feel.

This was a great example of design choices made to support residents who need or want a quiet space.

Bedrooms

All the bedrooms we saw were a good size with queen size beds and had large windows looking out onto the grounds. All rooms have an en-suite wet room which were well tiled and had privacy glass in place allowing in plenty of light.

Residents can bring in their own furniture if they choose and personalise the rooms to their own taste. All rooms come with a large TV fixed on the wall and storage provided.

Feedback from residents, relatives, and staff.

Healthwatch spoke with 4 members of staff and 3 residents.



"I've got my freedom, everyone here is lovely"



"I love it, I bought a mobility scooter, and I go and do peoples shopping. I've got my freedom, everyone here is lovely, (the manager) got me a fridge for my room".

Resident A

"It's alright, I am okay. My room is very comfortable."

"The food is okay it's as you would expect, I don't have any big opinions I'm happy, the activities are okay"

Resident B

"It's brilliant I have no complaints about anything. There are a few staff that I fancy (laughs). The food is very good and there is a good variety, it's very good. The curry is my favourite."

(Residents joking about activities) "I like to sit on my brains now"

Any recommendations- "Put in a bar!, but we can have a beer if we want one."

"I have worked in care for 23 years and this place is something else. Things are not regimented, the residents can do what they want. I had an injury and the management checked in on me and supported me."

"I feel like I can be myself here it feels like a family. I get more out of this job than I give."

Staff member

Summary and recommendations

Summary

We observed during our short visit to Woolton Acre Retirement Living that it is care home that seems to be running well and is preparing to support more people as it expands upon the number of residents they support.

The building from what we saw is impressive both inside and out and the exterior has a feel of a well-maintained stately home. The massive grounds and the surrounding greenery are a welcome sight especially for those who enjoy nature and spending time outside.

The building was decorated well throughout with thoughtful touches to support residents such as the quiet room. There were pictures and ornaments throughout, and the home did not feel clinical.

Woolton Acre on the day we visited was clean throughout and there was a calm atmosphere helped undoubtedly by the high ratio of staff to resident numbers with the lower occupancy.

Management and staff seemed to have built a rapport with the residents and the people we spoke to seemed content. Management has a plan in place for the increase in numbers of residents as well as the new dementia ward. We were impressed by the plans described for the dementia service that the manager was to justify with examples, evidence and references to health legislation.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations for Woolton Acre Retirement Living.

- Consider installing activities stations

Management spoke of plans to provide solo activities. We have seen examples of activity stations in care homes supplied with art supplies, crosswords and word searches that we felt were examples of good practice.

Positives and good practice

We found during our visit to Woolton Acre examples of positives and good practice which included but were not limited to:

- The building and the grounds were a strength with plenty of space and greenery. Clearly effort has gone into maintenance and decoration to make an imposing building feel so homely.

- The staff we spoke to seemed happy in their jobs and described feeling supported. Some of these staff had many years' experience in the care sector and felt that things were working well. We hope staff are supported as resident numbers increase.
- Senior staff seemed realistic about the challenges that the increase of resident numbers will bring. They have plans in place and were able to justify their reasons and what they will do to enhance the experience for residents.

Appendix

Healthwatch Liverpool – Powers to Enter and View Services

Healthwatch Liverpool was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and came into being in April 2013. We work to give local residents a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided.

We enable people to share their views and concerns about local health and social care services, helping build a picture of where services are doing well, and where they can be improved. Enter and View visits are undertaken in accordance with the remit of Healthwatch Liverpool, and assist us in carrying out our statutory functions under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Enter and View visits are not designed to be full inspections, audits or an investigation of the service, rather they are an opportunity for us to get a better understanding of the service by seeing it in action and by talking to staff and service users.

We aim to identify and share good practice wherever possible. However, if during a visit we identify any aspects of a service that it has serious concerns about, then these concerns are referred to the appropriate regulator or commissioners of the service for investigation or rectification.

Any safeguarding issues identified will be referred to the Local Authority for investigation. Addressing issues of a less serious nature may be done directly with the service provider.

For more information about Healthwatch Liverpool, please visit our website www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk or contact us using the details at the end of this report.



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